

7. *CHÆTURA DOMINICANA*.

Chætura dominicana, Lawr. Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sc. i. p. 255.

Chætura poliura, Lawr. Proc. U.S. Nat. Mus. i. p. 62.

Mr. Lawrence was quite right in separating this species from *C. poliura* (vide P. Z. S. 1870, p. 329). But although Buffon's figure (Pl. Enl. 544. fig. 1) is very bad, I should have been inclined to refer the Dominican *Chætura* (mainly from the locality) to the "*Hirondelle de la Martinique*," and to call it *Chætura acuta* (Gm.).

V.—*Ornithological Letters from the Pacific*. No. I.

By OTTO FINSCH, Ph.D.

Honolulu, July 28, 1879.

AFTER eight days' stay in Washington, where I spent a pleasant time with Professor Baird and other old friends in the Smithsonian, and saw the foundations of the new grand Museum-building, we went straight through to the Pacific coast, and reached San Francisco on the 31st of May. The members of the California Academy of Sciences most cordially welcomed me. The Academy unfortunately cannot yet dispose of the liberal gift of Mr. Lick (I believe 600,000 dollars), and therefore has still its head quarters in the old church. Their collections are very limited, and cannot be compared with those in Woodward's Garden, which have been amassed by the zeal of Mr. Gruber, now keeper of the Museum there. Woodward's Garden, although intended more for pleasure and amusement than pure science, is certainly a most interesting institution, and just what San Francisco and America generally require. Mr. Gruber has carried out an idea which I had long ago in my mind, and which Mr. Wallace portrayed in the drawings of his work on the distribution of animals. This is a representation of the chief types of the different zoological centres of the globe by giving good illustrations of the fauna of the different parts of the earth in stuffed specimens, in accordance with the peculiar flora. This very instructive invention, which Mr. Gruber calls a "*Zoographicon*"

is not only made to rotate as a whole, so that the different views follow each other, but the chief representatives of it are also in motion: the Woodpecker hammers; the Dipper dives; the Ducks swim, and so on. This gives the whole a Marionette-like character, which of course is very attractive to the greater part of the visitors. The "Zoographicon" is always crowded!

The Menagerie in Woodward's Garden excels that of some of the smaller gardens in Germany, and contained some birds seen alive by me for the first time, e. g. *Anser albatus*, *Alca cirrata*, and *Diomedea brachyura*. The last-named species I saw afterwards in free nature. We left San Francisco in the 'City of New York' for Honolulu on June 9th. The bay was swarming with Gulls (*Larus occidentalis*) and *Uria californica*, the latter reminding one in its manners of the flocks of its smaller relative (*Mergulus alle*), which we had met with on the Atlantic when passing the banks on the 2nd and 3rd of May. But *Mergulus* is much more lively than *Uria*! As we approached the gigantic rocky islands (the Farralones), the Gulls increased in number, and flocks of *Mormon cirrata* were passing by. They make a very striking appearance in bird-life, and are easily recognizable by their red bills, and yellow ear-tufts. We had scarcely lost sight of the Farralones when the first Albatrosses made their appearance. There were first two, then four, a short while after twelve, behind the steamer, quarrelling with the Gulls over the refuse from the kitchen thrown overboard. The next day (June 10) Gulls had disappeared, and Albatrosses were the only visitors near the steamer. They were all *Diomedea brachyura*, and were all young birds in the uniform dark-brown garb of immaturity. Some specimens were changing plumage, showing more or less of a white band and white rump and lower tail-coverts; some were light-coloured beneath, below the breast. These Albatrosses were to be seen every hour of the day in smaller or larger numbers, varying from four to forty, careering around the vessel even after sunset. The flight of these birds is very fine; they seem to swim above the water, and often for a long while do not move the wings at all.

When they alight on the water they stretch out the legs forwards like Vultures. They can raise themselves easily by making a few steps on the water with their feet. They snap at every thing that falls overboard, even such unpalatable things as old baskets, &c., and could be easily caught with a hook, if the steamer were not going too fast. It seemed that these flocks which followed our steamer consisted every day of different individuals; for on the 11th of June nearly the whole day an Albatross kept in sight of us, which was easily recognizable by having a collar of red ribbon around its neck. This bird had no doubt been captured and liberated again, decorated in this manner. The Albatrosses were, as mentioned already, nearly the only birds we saw in this part of our voyage. Besides, I observed only occasional single specimens of a dark-coloured *Puffinus* (white underneath) and of a small kind of Storm-Petrel (*Procellaria*). The Tropic-bird (*Phaëton*) was not seen until we caught sight of the Hawaiian Islands (Hawaii itself) on the 16th of June; at the same time I observed a Frigate-bird (*Tachypetes*) soaring like a rapacious bird high in the air, but easily recognizable by its forked tail. When land was approached the Albatrosses became rarer, and finally disappeared altogether.

As the 'City of New York' got fast on a reef going into the harbour, we were not landed at Honolulu before the morning of the 17th June. In passing through the streets of the garden-like city, the eyes of the stranger are caught by the immense numbers of Mainas (*Acridotheres tristis*, I believe), which have been imported from China. These Mainas are a great nuisance to the inhabitants, as they drive away the Pigeons and Fowls, and are said to destroy the nests and eggs of the domestic birds. That they do drive out the Pigeons from their houses I observed many times myself. Their nests, which are constructed of fine roots and twigs, form great disorderly heaps, and contained two young ones (very young and still naked), or two eggs, in colour bluish, like that of our Starling (*Sturnus*). The Mainas are ever active and noisy; and the noise made by hundreds crying at their roosting-places is indescribable. In Mr. Barning's garden, where the finest

trees, chiefly palms, abound, hundreds and thousands come to roost; and their unharmonious concert lasts from six in the evening for an hour or more. The same is the case at daybreak (a little after five o'clock). Next to the Mainas our House-Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) takes the chief place; and it is very interesting to the stranger from the west to see his fellow-countryman, the Common House-Sparrow, located in cocoanut-trees in company with Mainas, just as if it had always been accustomed to this tropical tree. Besides the noise of the Mainas, and the chirping of the Sparrow, the call of a Turtle Dove is to be heard in every garden. This is also an introduced species from China (*Turtur chinensis*). These three species were all I saw during a week's stay at Honolulu. Even some excursions into the environs, to Punch-bowl Hill and a neighbouring valley, made me acquainted only with two other birds—namely, a species of *Carpodacus*, imported from California, and the Short-eared Owl (*Otus brachyotus*). The latter seems to pursue a very different kind of life from what I saw of it in the tundras of Northern Siberia, and is hated by the inhabitants as a devourer of poultry.

The prospect being, as it appeared, not very encouraging, I left Honolulu as soon as possible, and started on June 24th for Mani, where we remained several weeks, stopping first at Waiehu, a lovely spot in the picturesque range of West Mani, where there are peaks of 7000 feet elevation, and then at Olinda, the summer residence of Mr. S. Alexander.

While crossing the desert-like isthmus from Malaea Bay to Waike I observed no other birds than a few Mainas and the Turtle Dove; but when I visited the small lagoon near the latter place I was gratified with the sight of *Fulica alai* and *Gallinula sandvicensis*. Both species I observed repeatedly at the lagoon of Kahalui (Mani) and near Waimanalo (Oahu). In manners, habits, and cry both these birds closely resemble their allies in Europe; but both are undoubtedly different species. The Coot may at once be easily distinguished by its uniform pale greyish feet, without any greenish band on the joint of the knee. Besides, the cry is not so

loud and harsh; and the eggs are smaller, as is also the bird. The eggs I got at the lagoon of Kahalui. Here I also observed *Actitis incana*, a *Charadrius* (like *C. hiaticula*), a *Himantopus*, which Mr. Dole designates *H. candidus*, but which seems to be identical with the American species, and a Snipe like our *Gallinago scolopacina*. This Snipe is not yet known from the Sandwich Islands, and is perhaps new. In the autumn the lagoon is said to swarm with Plovers (*Charadrius fulvus*), now breeding in arctic regions, and Ducks. Of the latter (*Anas wyvilliana*, Selater) I saw flocks in the swamps near Waimanalo (Oahu). There were also a few Herons frequenting the reeds, and reminding me in manners very much of our *Nycticorax*, perching during the daytime in *Pandanus*-trees. They were of uniform greyish brown, and belonged apparently to *Ardea sacra*. The white form I observed once at Kahalui.

Reaching Olinda (about 5400 feet altitude), halfway to the Haleakala, I found native forests of Kokui and Ohia trees, and in them native bird-life. During ten days' stay in this region I got examples of only five species of birds, but observed some others, and one or two which seemed to me from their notes very peculiar, and which gave me the idea that these woods may hold a few unknown species. But it is very hard work to make observations in these forests, with their immense wilderness of fallen trees and shrubs, and still more difficult to shoot a bird, and to find it when shot. Naturalists who have seen the tropics of Africa and America, will wonder to hear that I succeeded in getting only twenty birds; but I had to do all the work myself, as the able bird-catchers of former days among the natives are nearly as extinct as the whole race. And in the same way are going the native forests, and with them the native birds. With the Oliva tree, on the wonderful red flowers of which the *Drepanis* feeds, will disappear these lovely birds, which formerly furnished the materials for the precious clothes of the kings. I observed many examples of *Drepanis coccinea* and *D. sanguinea*, and heard their nice little song, and got them. But it was moulting-time, and the birds did not make good speci-

mens. But *D. coccinea* alive, with its bright vermilion bill and legs, is a wonderful bird. The stomach of both species contained nothing more than small seeds. Male and female of *D. sanguinea* wear the same garb. Quite different in manner and song is *Drepanis flava*, of which I got both sexes. The commonest species is *Hemignathus obscurus*. It goes in small flocks from tree to tree, reminding one in manners and its short call very much of *Parus*, and taking apparently an intermediate position between the latter and the Leaf-Warblers (*Phylloscopus*). As regards nesting I could make no observations, as the breeding-time was over, and most of the birds were feeding their young. One species, of which I shot an example thus occupied, would have proved new had it not been described a very short time ago by Mr. Dole (Hawaiian Almanac for 1879, p. 45) as *Drepanis aurea*). This little bird, which Mr. Dole described from Hawaii, is, no doubt, a *Hypoloxias*; and as the species is unknown in Europe, I give here a description of the old and young birds.

HYPLOXIAS AUREA.

Drepanis aurea, Dole, Haw. Almanac, 1879, p. 45.

Uniform orange; quills blackish brown, margined externally with the same colour, but more sordid; covers of primaries and secondaries on the outer webs broadly margined with dull orange. Bill hornish-blue, tip blackish; iris dark brown. Stomach containing nests of insects (caterpillars); first and third primaries longest, first scarcely shorter.

Young (just able to fly, and fed by the former). Upper parts dull olive green, the outer margin of the dark brown quills and tail-feathers more vivid, the same as the tips of the secondaries, which form a pale cross band on the wing; lower parts pale olive-yellow, chin passing into whitish; bill horn-blackish, tip darker; feet black; third and fourth primaries longest, second equal to fifth, somewhat shorter, first a little shorter; tail twelve feathers. Tongue ordinary, bifurcated at tip.

These were all the birds I got; but, as mentioned above, I

heard others—among them a very melodious song, reminding one of *Petrocossyphus cyanus*. The songster was, perhaps, *Chasiempis*. *Psittirostra psittacea* I saw repeatedly; but I lost those I shot, from their falling into the ferns.

I also got information of a very curious bird, which the natives call "*U-au*." According to the description it breeds in holes underground on the mountains, resorting to its nesting-place only at night. I do not doubt that the bird is a species of *Puffinus*, as similar habits are known of allied species in the Fijis, Navigators' Islands, Tahiti, &c. To obtain information of this species, which Mr. Dole enumerates as "*Procellaria alba*, Gm.," I made a day's trip to a part of the Northern Haleakala ranges, where the birds were said to be breeding. Although I took the best guide I could get, we found nothing but a few old holes under the ferns, and an old dried-up white egg. The species remains, therefore, still uncertain; but I have no doubt that it is the same which I saw soaring in evening-time on the rocky coast near Lahama. The bird looked black, white below, and reminded me of *Puffinus obscurus*. Just as unsuccessful was our trip to the spot where *Bernicla sandvicensis* breeds in the gigantic crater Haleakala, as, on account of the exhausted condition of our horses, we could not get into the crater, but were forced to be satisfied with a look into it, a sight never to be forgotten.

My next letter will, I trust, contain notes from Micronesia, as we start tomorrow on board of the bark 'Hawaii' direct for Taluit (Bonham), the chief place of the Marshall Group. As this region is a little out of the way, a long time will elapse before I shall be able to write again.

VI.—*A further Contribution to the Ornithology of Asia Minor.*

By C. G. DANFORD.

(Plate II.)*

THE principle that "every little helps" must be my excuse

* The accompanying sketch map of Asia Minor shows the routes (coloured red) described in the present and in my former paper (Ibis,